

corruption, which honor education, which focus on health care, so that there is good habits developed, so that people actually benefit—and not just a few.

Peru-U.S. Relations

Q. In the case of Peru, what concrete announcement should we expect? Perhaps expanding Plan Colombia into the region, or any interdiction flights over Peru? A free trade agreement of the Andean region, with Peru?

The President. Si. Well, first of all, *por cierto*, I want to tell people that we're going to work to get this Andean trade preference in place, real, so that the Andean countries can plan on it.

Other than that, the main thing—the reason I'm coming to Peru is, I want to make it clear how much I appreciate President Toledo's focus on democracy and reform. He's been a bold leader, and I thank him for that very much. And I want the Peruvian people to know that we will cooperate and work closely with the Government to foster institutions that promote freedom. I know President Toledo is committed to that.

But the main thing I'm concerned about is making sure that prosperity is alive and well with our friends. We want our friends to succeed. A strong Peru, a healthy Peru, is good for the United States.

Q. President, could you please use this occasion to say a few words in Spanish directed to the people of Peru.

The President. *Pues, to las personas que vida en Peru, quiero decir, estamos sus amigos aqui en los Estados Unidos. Hay muchas personas que desean relaciones buenos, mejores con los personas que viven en Peru. Y tambien quiero decir a President Toledo, usted es mi amigo, y muchas gracias para la oportunidad de viajar a esta pais muy importante.*

Q. *Muy bien. Muchas gracias, Senor Presidente.*

The President. Si.

Q. *Si, es un honor para nosotros para conversar con usted.*

The President. *El placer es mio.* Thank you, sir.

NOTE: The interview began at 10:48 a.m. in the Map Room at the White House. In his remarks,

the President referred to President Alejandro Toledo of Peru. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this interview.

Interview With Lourdes Meluza of Univision

March 20, 2002

President's Upcoming Visit to Latin America

Ms. Meluza. Some countries in Latin America feel that after 9/11, the region has been relegated—or has lost its priority that you have so clearly stated in the past. Do you plan with this trip to reinsert the region in your priorities, in your agenda? And if so, what are the substantive issues to prove it?

The President. Sure. First of all, the trip will give me a chance to say again that the best foreign policy for America is to have a peaceful, democratic, and prosperous neighborhood.

Secondly—and it should be noted that my first stop is to Mexico. Obviously, there's the development conference, which is an important conference. That, in itself, will help me talk about how we've committed a lot of money to helping alleviate world poverty. And there's poverty in our neighborhood.

It will also give me a chance to have a bilateral meeting with my friend Vicente Fox to talk about the importance of Mexican-U.S. relations. That relationship has not diminished. I mean, that relationship is as strong as ever. We've got huge amounts of trade going back and forth, a lot of people going back and forth, and we're going to talk about initiatives that make the border policy more productive, better, more efficient, and at the same time protect both our countries from terrorist threats.

My trip to Peru will give me a chance to talk about the Andean Trade Preference Act. I want to—that needs to be passed by the United States Congress, and it needs to be passed quickly. This will give me a chance to, on the one hand, say to our friends there, not only Toledo but to the leaders, that I want the Andean Trade Preference Act; I'm committed to it; I will fight for it; and then at the same time send a message to Congress.

Y por fin, El Salvador is a Central American country, and again it will give me a chance to talk about the importance of that region.

Don't worry, we've got plenty of time.

Temporary Protected Status

Ms. Meluza. Will you offer, sir, TPS, temporary protective status, which Central American regions, nations are looking for?

The President. Right, they are. In terms of the El Salvadoran TPS status, I was a strong supporter of it in the past. It doesn't come up until September of this year. I think it's important for me to withhold judgment until we are close to the date, but I—let me just put it this way: I was a supporter in the past, a vocal supporter of TPS status, and I will express my opinion at the appropriate time.

Mexico-U.S. Border Policy

Ms. Meluza. Sir, you will visit the border tomorrow, El Paso. Do you believe that consolidating the agencies that handle the border will strengthen the security in the border? And will you send a recommendation to Congress?

The President. I'm studying different options. But here's what I want to achieve: A border that recognizes how much traffic there is, normal traffic—a border that recognizes we've got trucks and cars moving goods and services throughout both our countries and a border policy that recognizes there are hundreds of people going back and forth on a daily basis who have done this for years on years, brothers and sisters, sons and daughters, on both sides of *la frontera*; and on the other hand, that we've got to work with our Mexican friends to make sure the border has got the best infrastructure, the best technology, the best intelligence sharing to make sure that we stop the "coyotes," the smugglers, and the terrorists. And we can do both.

But the border policy needs to be reviewed. And if it is achieved, if it's better achieved by a new construct, then I'll support it. And I just want to make sure that I get all the facts before I make my decision.

Immigration Policy

Ms. Meluza. Sir, in the past, immigration had a high priority on your agenda with Mexico. When you sit down with President Fox this time, will you bring back again meaningful conversations about immigration policy, a wide immigration policy? And will you jump-start again these negotiations?

The President. *Si, por cierto.* I mean, immigration's a big issue. It's a big issue for Mexico; it's a big issue for the United States. And we're starting with what we call 245(i), which is needed. And I want to remind people that we can't get it out of the Senate. I've spoken out on it very clearly; I did so again yesterday; I did the day before. I worked with the House to get it out. And people say, "Well, that's not enough. We need to continue a dialog." But it's a start. And so I would hope the advocates here in Washington, DC, will be up there lobbying the United States Senate, so we can actually get something done.

Secondly—it's very important—I still believe we need a policy that recognizes there are employers willing to employ people from Mexico, for example, and there are willing workers who are looking for jobs. And we've got to recognize that as reality and make that work.

Ms. Meluza. So when you talk about willing workers and willing employees—employers, do you mean to say that some here in the States will benefit from this policy again?

The President. Yes—

Ms. Meluza. Not only a temporary workers program?

The President. Well, we'll see. I mean, that needs to be discussed. But all I can tell you is, the basic premise of good policy is to say there are employers in the United States who are looking for somebody to work, and there are people from Mexico who are willing to do the job. And our legal system and our immigration system ought to recognize that important relationship and make it work.

Ms. Meluza. Even those who are here now?

The President. That's very much of a possibility, of course. I mean, obviously, they're here doing a job that somebody wants them to do. But there's got to be the matching

of the willing employer and willing employee. And if they're here now, fine. They ought to be discussed, and they ought to be a part of the mix, of course.

Ms. Meluza. I think that my time is up. Thank you very much, sir.

The President. Thank you. Good job.

Ms. Meluza. Thank you very much, sir. Lots of pressure.

The President. You look great in red.

NOTE: The interview began at 11:01 a.m. in the Map Room at the White House. In his remarks, the President referred to President Vicente Fox of Mexico; and President Alejandro Toledo of Peru. He also referred to section 245(i) of the Immigration and Nationality Act, which expired April 30, 2001. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this interview.

Interview With Telemundo

March 20, 2002

Mexico-U.S. Border Issues

Q. Mr. President, you're going to make an announcement about the situation on the border with Mexico. And that's something that, for millions of our viewers, is very, very important. Can you advance something of what you're going to say? [Laughter]

The President. *La frontera es muy importante por los Estados Unidos y tambien Mexico.* The infrastructure—*la frontera necesita*—I mean, we've got to change for the better. We need to focus on new technologies, and we need to have a smart policy which recognizes two things.

One, there is a lot of normal traffic that ought to be facilitated as opposed to stopped. There's a lot of traffic with trucks and a lot of traffic with people. Secondly, we've got to be wise about stopping things we don't want to have happen. In other words, we've got to encourage things we want to have happen and wise about stopping things we don't want to have happen, *los coyotes*, the terrorists, *las drogas*. And we can do a better job of assigning risk and focusing our resources and infrastructure and technologies to make it work better.

That's really what it is. There's not much new; there really isn't much new, except for a determined focus to make the border work.

And our cooperation with the Fox Government has been very good.

Q. There's a huge challenge balancing homeland security—

The President. Yes.

Q. —and not disturbing something that is part of the blood of this country; that is immigration.

The President. That's right.

Q. How do you manage to do something like that?

The President. Well, it's the first to recognize that there are people who come to our country *para trabajar*. They love freedom; they want to work; they want to feed their families. Those family values—*values de la familia no pare in la Rio Bravo*. They've got moms and dads in Mexico who want to work.

And so a good immigration policy recognizes there are people in the United States who want to employ, Mexicans who want to work, and we've got to facilitate them coming together. That has nothing to do with the war on terror; that has everything to do to make sure that our economy grows. And we can do a better job of that. We need to modernize that part of the immigration law.

At the same time, when we share intelligence, when we modernize the border, when we use biometrics, for example, on the border, when we've got new machines that are able to look inside trucks, then I think we can do both. We can have an immigration policy that's wise and an antiterrorist homeland security for both countries that is effective. And that's what I've been talking to President Fox about, as well as the Canadians. And we've got good relationships. So we can do a lot better job of making the border work better.

Documentation for Aliens

Q. The Mexican consulates are giving to the Mexicans in this country an ID called *matricula consular*. And in some counties in California and in Texas—and it's expanding—it's been accepted officially as an ID, and they can open bank accounts and stuff like that. Is it realistic to think that there could be a way to think in further terms about something like that?

The President. *Es posible.* Remember there are—again, I think it's very important